

Notes

Small Group - A group of 3-12 people who meet together on a regular basis for the purpose of growing as disciples of Jesus X.

Small Group Ministry - An organizational structure that supports the small group leaders (facilitators) with skill development, nurture, and communication.

Priorities 1. Be a student of small group ministry
2. Provide initial training. 3. Furnish ongoing training.
4. Initiate regular contact. 5. Expect accountability.

Training - weekend retreat - weekend training.

13 week leadership "Big Book on Small Groups". Jeffery Arnold

Hands on training.

Group dynamics

Expectations

Crisis/Conflict

Lead Discussions

Fears -

Afraid to pray in front of others.

Afraid to recruit people for group.

Break into 2's + pray for each other.

Prayer partners

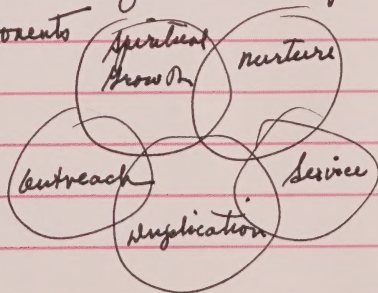
Ongoing Training - bimonthly. Elevational, Internet.

Turner leading training - interactive. Meet at a home.

Regular Contact - Stay in touch via e-mail. web site updates

Expect Accountability - Don't let turn into bitch session, chge as
divisible of church. Keep in contact.

Components
of a



Ten Steps to a Successful Cell Group Ministry

by Elaine German

1. Pray.

There is a saying: *When we work, we work. When we pray, God works.* Get out of the way and let God work on the people God has already set aside for this ministry. God sees things in people we often cannot see. Pray that God will reveal to you the people and resources to make this ministry successful.

2. Know your stuff.

There are a variety of small groups within a congregation – the altar guild, the choir, the hospitality team, and so on. These groups are all necessary, but a cell group ministry is different and needs to be developed intentionally. If you do not understand the theory and history behind the cell group movement, you will miss out on vital information to make your cell group ministry work. This does not mean your cell groups must be clones of other churches; but rather that you look at some designs, prepare your own blueprint, and lay a firm foundation before you build the house. There are some wonderful books about small group ministry available from your local Christian bookstore. Try books on tape if that appeals to you. The more you educate yourself, the greater your likelihood of success.

3. Develop a vision.

After reading several books on cell group ministry, take some time to think about your church, your resources, your people. Whether you are starting a cell group ministry for the first time, or trying to bring new life into an existing ministry, it is a good idea to survey your congregation (or even the community at large) to determine their needs. Neal McBride developed an excellent Small Groups Needs Assessment in his book *How to Build a Small Groups Ministry* (NavPress). The survey doesn't just ask people what kind of groups they want, rather it asks people to rank their needs. The needs are things like accountability, Bible study, evangelism, fellowship, ministry, prayer, recreation, support, etc. Then it asks for their status (single, partnered) and age group. It takes less than five minutes to complete and gives you good information to design your ministry to meet the needs of the people, which is critical for success in any endeavor.

Now that you have read and gathered information, be still and allow God to formulate in your mind a picture of cell group ministry in your church. Write out ideas and plans. Set goals. An idea I got from Anthony Robbins, the self-help, motivational guru of the 90's, is to take three minutes to brainstorm as many goals as you can think of. Do not allow any limitations; just let the ideas fly. After three minutes, select the top five that you must accomplish no matter what. Write each one on an index card. For each goal write a compelling reason why you must achieve it. Then, for each goal, write ten practical action steps you can take over the next week, month or year to reach the goal. These steps will be your road map to success. This is called the "What, Why, How" method of goal-setting. The "what" is the goal itself; the "why" is the reason you must complete the goal no matter what. Finally, the "how" is the ten action steps. It is simple, but effective.

4. Enlist help.

If you are the senior pastor reading this, you will definitely want to get someone else to administer your small group program. You have been praying for God to send someone – now is the time to put action to your prayers. Don't put it in the bulletin – handpick someone and ask him or her personally. Tell them why you picked them and then spend time with them to cast your vision. Ask him or her to do some reading about cell group ministry. If the person you pick is already very active in your church, help them give up some of their other ministry areas so they can concentrate on small groups. This piece is often overlooked, but critical. A successful cell group ministry takes a substantial time commitment. If you truly want it to work, you must enlist people who are available – or help them become available. Church growth consultant, Wendy Foxworth, says to enlist first by attitude, then by giftedness. I agree, but a big third on my list is availability. If this person is dividing his or her time between several other ministries, the cell group ministry will not receive enough attention and will be mediocre, at best.

If you are not the senior pastor, but you have a burning desire to start a small group ministry in your church, enlist the support of your senior pastor. Even if you have a multi-staff church where an associate pastor is in charge of small groups, this must be a partnership between the professional clergy and the laity – and both should be fully committed.

5. Develop training.

This is one ministry where people need preparation, but unfortunately this is where many churches miss the mark. If you enlist people and then put them out to lead groups with no prior preparation, the chances of failure multiply. Here are some important things they need to know before leading a group: the vision and goals of the small group ministry, the life cycles of small groups, how to lead a dynamic discussion, how to write a group covenant and how to get people into their groups. After these initial topics, they will receive ongoing training at the regularly scheduled leadership meetings (see below), but they do need an initial orientation.

There are many ways to train group leaders. You can have a full-day session, a couple of half-day sessions, or prepare them in a small group over a period of ten to thirteen weeks. The latter is my favorite because the potential group leaders have a positive experience in a small group, the facilitator becomes a model for leadership behavior and they discuss in-depth how to lead a small group. Again, there are many good models for training and resources available.

6. Enlist group leaders and coaches.

I stress again, handpick your leaders. If you advertise in the bulletin, you may get people who feel “called” to lead a small group, but who are unhealthy and have no business being a group leader. In this case, you will either have the unpleasant job of telling them they are not suited to small group leadership, or let them go ahead and suffer the consequences. My preference is to ask people individually. Eventually, all of your small group leaders will come from recommendations made by current small group leaders from members of their groups, but in the beginning, pick them yourself.

If you are going to train group leaders using the 13-week approach, a good place to enlist participants is at the membership class. There are several advantages to this: they are

enthusiastic and they have not gotten bogged down in other ministries. If your membership class is interactive you can observe them to get an initial reaction to them. Then, invite them to talk with you one-on-one, ask them some questions about their faith and their life situation. If you continue to be impressed with them, ask them to come to your next 13-week class. During the 13 weeks you will have time to observe them further and see if they are ready to take on the responsibility. If they are not quite ready, you might offer them an apprentice position with another group until they have matured. This process takes more time but is worth it in the long run.

If you opt for the one-day training, you will want to know the people a little better to be more confident about their maturity and commitment. The one-day training is ideal for those who have been apprenticed in a small group, or people you know who have had prior experience with small groups.

7. Start mentoring right away.

At the risk of sounding controlling, insist your small group leaders enlist an apprentice group leader within two months of starting their group. Mentoring an apprentice is a topic that should be covered in the initial training and stressed all along. Talk about it regularly in your leadership meetings. David Limiero, the Interim Senior Minister of the First Christian Church in Naperville, Illinois, wrote an article for the Small Group Network called *Lifting the LIDS: A Model for Developing Apprentice Leaders*. He gives four steps to develop an apprentice: LOOK for rising leaders; INVITE them to share leadership tasks; DISCIPLE them until they can replace you; then SEND them into ministry. He says the characteristics to look for in a rising leader are FAR: Faithfulness, Availability and Relationship. What he means by relationship is, could you be part of the group without this person? An apprentice is not a co-leader. You are mentoring them to leave the group. If it is your spouse or a significant other, you may not want them to leave the group. Jeffery Arnold says we should look for FAT people (Faithful, Available, Teachable). John Maxwell says to look for people of FAITH (faithful, accountable, a person of influence, teachable and a heart for God).

After we find an apprentice we INVITE them to share leadership tasks. Remember the story of the talents in Matthew. When the master returned he gave a model for developing apprentices, "You have been faithful with little, I will now put you in charge of much." It's as simple as asking them to send a card or make a phone call to someone in the group. Did they do it? Then maybe ask them to help you pick out some materials for the group. Did they come with you? Perhaps you might then ask them to lead the discussion one evening. You could ask them to lead the prayer request time. If they are faithful in these small tasks, ask them to become your apprentice and tell them why you picked them. Then DISCIPLE them. What does this mean? Limiero gives a model: I do, you watch; I do, you help; You do, I help; You do, I watch; You do, someone else watches. Then SEND them out. Remember, they are not the co-leader of your group. They are an apprentice and are in-training to lead their own group. One sign of a good leader is that he or she is willing and able to give leadership away. If you do not have an active mentoring program, your small group ministry will not grow. It is not a lack of participants in the small groups that bring about failure, rather a lack of trained leaders.

8. Meet with group leaders regularly.

Carl George in his book *Prepare Your Church for the Future* calls these VHS meetings. VHS stands for Vision, Huddle, Skill. These are the three ingredients every meeting should have. The senior pastor is the one to cast the vision at every meeting. Group leaders should leave every meeting exhilarated, knowing everything they give to this ministry is life-changing. Don't ever let them forget that.

The huddle is where they talk about how things are going in their groups and share suggestions and ideas with each other. When you get more than six group leaders you should split the group leaders into smaller groups to do this sharing. One problem I have encountered in these meetings is that the meetings get bogged down with one or two people monopolizing this time and the other group leaders getting bored. If you have coaches in place, have the group leaders split up with their own coaches. This will help them bond with their coach and the smaller group. As they grow closer, they will begin to trust this group with their insecurities and problems with their groups. It is these areas, where they feel the least secure about their leadership skills, that you will want to focus on during skill-building.

Every meeting should have a skill-building session of 20 to 30 minutes. These sessions are important to help group leaders sharpen their skills and improve in areas where they feel weak. These sessions could also be interactive. You could introduce scenarios of "real-life" situations and ask them come up with ideas on how to handle it. They could then share these in the smaller groups, or with the large group. You could introduce roll plays and have them work in twos or threes. The key for these meetings is to make them interactive, relevant and fun for everyone. That's what will keep them coming back.

9. Design a system of accountability.

Whether it's a written report or one-on-one discussion, accountability needs to be present at every level. The group leaders are accountable to the coaches, the coaches to the administrator, and finally, the administrator and pastor to each other. Some of you might be thinking pastors should only be accountable to God. If we use the Bible as a guide, we can get a different feel for the kind of accountability I'm speaking of. Being accountable is a courtesy, a way of communicating that keeps everyone informed. The Bible tells us to be subject to one another in love and that those in authority should be servant leaders, not authoritarian. If we approach accountability in love, with the heart of a servant, none of us should have a problem with it.

10. Pray.

Hey, isn't that step #1? Sure is!

Elaine German is Director of Small Group Ministries at the Metropolitan Community Church of Richmond, VA. She has been a small group consultant to local churches in the Mid-Atlantic District. Look for her small group leader training materials and leadership meeting materials soon to be published. You may send e-mail to egermansgc@aol.com.

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Six Reasons American Small-Group Ministries Fail

Small-group systems in countries like Korea have exploded in evangelistic growth. Most American small-group ministries have not done so well. Why? An article in *Ministries Today* (May/June 1993) speculates on five reasons.

1. They are methodologically designed to fail. In Korea, the church is built around small groups, says David Yonggi Cho, pastor of Yoido Full Gospel Church, the largest church in the world, which is built upon cell groups. In America, however, small-group systems are built around the existing, traditional church. The concept of "church" in Korea centers around people, whereas in America it centers on the building. In Korean churches, small groups are central to everything they do. In American churches, small groups are usually just another program tacked onto the other ministries of the church.
2. They lack sufficient ministerial involvement. Cho says ministers must be personally committed to small groups. They must have personal knowledge, personal interest, and personal leadership in the small-group system.
3. They have not discerned the needs of the community. Today's society demands creative ways of reaching hurting people and filling their needs through relationships with others and with Christ. Support groups that help meet special needs will attract non-Christians to the church.
4. They are guided with no vision. Cho says many American churches stay small because they think small. He says "the number one requirement for having real church growth-unlimited church growth-is to set goals."
5. Leaders are selected and trained haphazardly. Cho's leaders must have a heart for small-group ministry and be willing to "contract" at least 10 hours a week for one year. Leadership training is essential to effective, dynamic, growing groups.
6. They do not pray. This factor was overlooked in the *Ministries Today* article, but it could be the most important reason for the Korean ministries' success. Some Korean cell groups devote up to three-fourths of their time in prayer. They rely on God's power more than on their human effort to guide them.

By Michael C. Mack

Originally published in *The Lookout* magazine, September 26, 1993.

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25. American Small Group Minutes 201

Small group minutes are written in the first person singular, as if you were the group leader. They are written in the present tense, as if you were writing them at the time of the meeting. (This is the 1977 edition of the minutes.)

1. The group met for the first time on Monday, January 1, 1977, at 7:00 p.m. in the room designated for the purpose. The group was composed of the following members: [list names]. The group was led by [name]. The group discussed the following items: [list items]. The group decided to [list decisions]. The group will meet again on [date and time].

2. The group met for the second time on Tuesday, January 2, 1977, at 7:00 p.m. in the room designated for the purpose. The group was composed of the following members: [list names]. The group was led by [name]. The group discussed the following items: [list items]. The group decided to [list decisions]. The group will meet again on [date and time].

3. The group met for the third time on Wednesday, January 3, 1977, at 7:00 p.m. in the room designated for the purpose. The group was composed of the following members: [list names]. The group was led by [name]. The group discussed the following items: [list items]. The group decided to [list decisions]. The group will meet again on [date and time].

4. The group met for the fourth time on Thursday, January 4, 1977, at 7:00 p.m. in the room designated for the purpose. The group was composed of the following members: [list names]. The group was led by [name]. The group discussed the following items: [list items]. The group decided to [list decisions]. The group will meet again on [date and time].

5. The group met for the fifth time on Friday, January 5, 1977, at 7:00 p.m. in the room designated for the purpose. The group was composed of the following members: [list names]. The group was led by [name]. The group discussed the following items: [list items]. The group decided to [list decisions]. The group will meet again on [date and time].

6. The group met for the sixth time on Saturday, January 6, 1977, at 7:00 p.m. in the room designated for the purpose. The group was composed of the following members: [list names]. The group was led by [name]. The group discussed the following items: [list items]. The group decided to [list decisions]. The group will meet again on [date and time].

7. The group met for the seventh time on Sunday, January 7, 1977, at 7:00 p.m. in the room designated for the purpose. The group was composed of the following members: [list names]. The group was led by [name]. The group discussed the following items: [list items]. The group decided to [list decisions]. The group will meet again on [date and time].

8. The group met for the eighth time on Monday, January 8, 1977, at 7:00 p.m. in the room designated for the purpose. The group was composed of the following members: [list names]. The group was led by [name]. The group discussed the following items: [list items]. The group decided to [list decisions]. The group will meet again on [date and time].

Open Arms Group Leader Meeting AGENDA

May 19, 1997

Opening Prayer – Ann Jenkins

Pastoral Vision – Rev. Maynard

Group Updates – Jim Speck and Anne Cook-Rose

OPEN ARMS Reorganization and Goals – Elaine German

Christian Leadership Discussion – Elaine German

Closing Prayer Circle – Rev. Maynard



OPEN ARMS – the heart of MCC Richmond.

[Please take some time to think and pray about the following and come prepared to discuss on May 19th.]

What do you feel is your greatest strength as a Christian leader?

Specifically, how have you utilized that strength over the past month in your ministry?

What do you feel is your most needed area of improvement as a Christian leader?

Over the next two months (until we meet again), what is one thing you are willing to do to improve in this area?

How can the Administrative Team and other Small Group Leaders help you accomplish this?

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF RICHMOND

Job Description for *OPEN ARMS* Small Group Leader

Job Title: *OPEN ARMS* Small Group Leader

Responsible to: The *OPEN ARMS* Administrative Team through their Group Leader Coach

Goal: To nurture and minister to a small group of people of not more than ten to twelve people.

Responsibilities:

- Attend the initial Group Leader training (as of 5/1/97 – *LEADER VISION*)
- Meet with your small group at least every other week.
- Prepare for small group meetings in advance.
- Between group meetings **pray for group members**, call them, write them cards and do things with them socially, if appropriate.
- Enlist and mentor an apprentice group leader. [*This is the key to *OPEN ARMS* growing.*]
- Help other group members discover and develop their spiritual gifts.
- Attend group leader meetings every other month.
- Meet one-on-one with the Group Leader Coach every other month and once a quarter with the Coach and other group leaders.
- Turn in a written report to the Group Leader Coach monthly.

Time Commitment:

Commitment for one year period, renewable at the end of each year.

Time Required:

- one or two hours per week for group member contact and preparation for small group meetings
- one to two hours weekly (or every other week) for group meetings
- one and one half hour every other month for group leader meetings
- one hour per month for meeting with small group Coach
- one to two hours a quarter to meet with Coach and other group members

OPEN ARMS Small Group Leader
page 2

Qualifications or Special Skills:

- a person of good character
- not perfect, but growing in maturity
- willing to let God have control
- humble
- willing and able to use your gifts to help others
- aware of your own strengths and weaknesses
- ethical
- nurturing
- sensitive in listening
- willing to be real and not afraid to be vulnerable
- a servant
- willing to give leadership away
- able to devote time and energy to the task of leading a small group

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF RICHMOND

Job Description for *OPEN ARMS* Coach

Job Title: *OPEN ARMS* Coach

Responsible to: The Council of Ministries through the *OPEN ARMS* Administrator

Goal: To be the primary support person for up to five *OPEN ARMS* small group leaders (including own group, if applicable).

Responsibilities:

- Attend Small Group Leader training.
- Attend group leader meetings every other month. During the meetings, lead your group leaders in a discussion about how things are going in their groups.
- Meet with *OPEN ARMS* Administrator every month (one month one-on-one and the other month with the Administrative Team).
- Have contact with each of your group leaders, either by phone, mail or in person, at least every other week. The purpose of this contact is to see how things are going, offer assistance and receive reports (see below).
- Receive a monthly report from each of your group leaders (see attached). This is the information you will use for meetings with the Administrator and Administrative Team to plan training and discuss specific needs.
- Assist each of your group leaders in enlisting and training an apprentice group leader [*This is the key to *OPEN ARMS* growing.*]
- Assist in planning a summer outing (picnic, swim party, etc.) for all the *OPEN ARMS* group leaders, apprentice group leaders and group leaders in training.
- Assist in planning an annual appreciation dinner for group leaders, apprentice group leaders and group leaders in training (to be held in January or February each year).

Time Commitment:

Commitment for one year period, renewable at the end of each year.

Time Required:

- one hour per week for group leader contact and information gathering
- one and one half hour every other month for group leader meetings
- one hour per month for meeting with *OPEN ARMS* Administrator and Team
- one to two hours a quarter to meet with all your group leaders together
- two or three hours twice a year to plan the outing and dinner
- one day in the summer for the outing and an evening in the winter for the dinner

Qualifications or Special Skills:

- ability to encourage and build up others, both verbally and in writing
- ability to motivate others
- good organization skills
- dependable
- ability to keep confidences
- open to innovative ideas and continual learning

Small Group Leader Plan

WORKSHEET

Please fill out and turn in by the end of this session. You will be assigned to a Group Leader Coach who will contact you to discuss further plans for your group and assist you with implementation. Thanks.

NAME _____ PHONE _____

My group will be...

_____ a study group _____ support group _____ special interest

other (specify) _____

and will focus on

I know that a successful group combines three things...nurture, prayer and spiritual growth. My plan for meeting each of these objectives is (be specific, e.g., how you will incorporate prayer, what kind of study you will do, etc.)...

Planning Worksheet

Page 2

My first three choices for a host for my group are...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

My first three choices for Apprentice Group Leader (optional for now) for my group are...

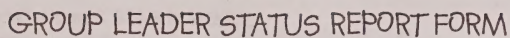
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The way I plan to get people involved in my group is...

The date of our first small group meeting will be...

One goal I have for myself as a leader over the next month is to...

One thing I need from the Administrative Team is...



Regular Meeting Dates and Times _____

Date	Date	Date	Date
<u>Attendees</u>	<u>Attendees</u>	<u>Attendees</u>	<u>Attendees</u>

**OPEN ARMS Small Group Ministry
Information Sheet**

Name of Group

Group Leader(s)/ Phone Number(s)

Apprentice Group Leader(s)

Host/Address/Phone Number

Meeting Dates and Times

Type of Group

Information about the group (what
you do, make up of men/women,
conservative/liberal, etc.)

What would you like us to tell
people who are interested in
your group?

To report changes in your group (meeting times, topics for discussion, location, etc., please contact Nona
Drumheller at 232-9870.

GROUP LEADER NOTES

Volume 3 Issue 2

August 1997

PASTOR'S CORNER

CASTING OUR NETS

When Jesus called those first disciples he said, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fish for people!" Peter and Andrew dropped their fishing nets and followed Jesus.

The Small Group Leaders and Participants are similar to those disciples. It is important to "cast your net and fish for people" by inviting them into your small group. When a guest comes to church for the first time we can invite them to learn about our group. Even people who have been coming awhile need to be invited to participate in a small group. Maybe the person is going through a recent breakup and in need of some new friends and supporters. Perhaps it is someone who is shy and is too scared to ask about small groups. Or, it could be someone who just doesn't know how much fun our small groups really are.

Our challenge is to cast our nets, inviting the people of God to become participants in small group ministry. It is vital for the spiritual growth of our people to have community in small groups! It is vital that we remember and model how the early church developed - through the meeting and sharing in peoples homes!

So, may we all cast our nets - and find that indeed, they are full!

Sharing in God's love and joy!

Judith



It is a fact that in the right formation, the lifting power of many wings can achieve twice the distance of any bird flying alone.



SATURDAY, AUGUST 30

OPEN ARMS Pool Party

11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Bring pot luck & lawn chair.

All small groups invited.

Call Alison at 798-4963 for details.



MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

hear Rev. Storey's vision
for small group ministry.



Monday, November 17

plan Christmas activities



Coming January 1998

Leadership Retreat



CELL GROUP MINISTRY LEADERSHIP IS A CHOICE

I am convinced there are more leaders in our church than are actually visible in leadership positions. What do I mean by leaders? Think about the following: Do you spend daily time in prayer? Do you read your Bible on a regular basis? Are you a good listener? Do you have healthy relationships with family and friends? Do your friends call you sometimes just to talk? Do you have a sense of humor? Do you face difficult situations head on? Are you growing closer to God? Are you not too busy to build relationships with people? Do you like to help people figure out things for themselves rather than "fixing" them? Do you like to learn to do things better? Are you open-minded? Do you like meeting and getting to know other people?

People often think a leader needs to be charismatic, a good public speaker or very outgoing. These are false assumptions about what constitutes a dynamic leader. Leadership is a way of behaving that makes people want to be with you and model your behavior. Leadership is a choice.

I read an article by a group leader coach who would visit each of her small groups on a regular basis to observe how they were doing. The first group leader was not very smooth in his approach, he was not very insightful about the Bible study and he did more listening

(see CELL GROUPS - page 2)

CELL GROUPS (continued)

than talking. Yet, his group was flourishing. Not only that, he had previously birthed three groups. People loved being in his group.

The other group leader was really smooth. He did everything by the book. He had wonderful icebreakers, his ideas were insightful and he led a guided prayer time each meeting. There were only a few people in his group, though, and he seemed to have trouble keeping members.

The difference she found was this: the first group leader was involved in the lives of his group members. He talked to them on the phone regularly, sat with them in church, went to brunch with them after church, sent them cards on special occasions and, generally was there for them through whatever they were going through. The second group leader, although well prepared for every meeting, hardly saw or talked to his group members in between each meeting.

This is a stark reminder that you don't have to be a dynamic speaker, you don't have to be outgoing, you don't have to be charismatic. You do need to love people and be interested in their lives. You need to make a choice. Do you want people to follow you? Be a leader. Be a good leader. Be a servant leader.

Elaine

Don't miss next month's group leader meeting:

"What Needs to Happen Between Group Meetings"



If you don't know where
you are going,
any road will get you there.

QUALITIES OF A LEADER

A good leader desires God's will. There is no room for self-seeking in Christian leadership. A selfish Christian leader is counterproductive to the purposes of God. When a leader seeks selfish ends, people they influence will do likewise. On the other hand, when a leader actively pursues God's will, others are likely to follow.

[Taken from *The Big Book on Small Groups* by Jeffrey Arnold, InterVarsity Press]

A good leader does not do everything for his or her group. That creates dependency and causes group helplessness. A good leader will get everyone in the group active doing something. Try having an official timekeeper so you'll have enough time at the end for prayer requests. Keep a book and ask someone to be the prayer request scribe. Have a person with good organization skills plan all group social functions. Get your group involved to come up with other "official" roles for group members which fit your group's personality.



WHAT PEOPLE REALLY WANT

A June, 1992 *Prior Report* revealed the top four things people want from a leader. They want a leader to be "one of us," "most of us," "the best of us" and to meet group member expectations.

Being "one of us" means not above other group members. Leaders should be real people who struggle in life just like everyone else. They should not have all the answers, but rather share with the group in seeking answers.

Being "most of us" means having the same norms and values as most of the group. If the leader is far-out, people will not follow. Some differences are good and challenging, but people will not follow a leader who is eccentric by their standards.

Being "the best of us" simply means the leader is able to harness the group's energy to be the best they can be as a group.

Meeting group members' expectations means different things to different people; however, the top expectations are being fair, being firm when necessary, being approachable and being considerate.

↓ Tip of the Month:

Ask each member to bring a baby picture of him/herself in a frame. Set them out on a table and have everyone go around and match the picture with the group member to see who can get the most correct.

Resources for Small Group Ministry

Compiled by Elaine German: revised August 1998

Small Group Theory - Getting the Vision - Starting a Ministry:

Arnold, Jeffery. *Starting Small Groups: Building Communities that Matter*. 1997. Abingdon Press, Nashville. [****] Jeffery Arnold is my favorite author on small groups. Although I do not agree with him on every point, he gives practical guidance from personal experience and I like that. This book will take you on an in-depth mission to develop a small group ministry. You will look at everything from how long group meetings should last to your values, vision and goals for your small group ministry. It is excellent and I highly recommend it.

Galloway, Dale. *20/20 Vision*. 1986. Scott Publishing, Portland. [****] This book will give you lots of information about the "how tos" of small group ministry. The two things I like best about it are it is inspirational and Galloway lays a foundation for small group ministry rooted in four things: vision, the Holy Spirit, prayer and love.

George, Carl F. *Prepare Your Church for the Future*. 1991. Revell, Tarrytown, N.Y. [****] This book is highly theoretical, laying out the principles of the meta-church model of celebration, congregation and cells within a church. This is a must-read for anyone serious about small group ministry.

George, Carl F. *The Coming Church Revolution: Empowering Leaders for the Future*. 1994, Revell: Grand Rapids, MI. [****] A sequel to *Prepare Your Church for the Future*, this book goes more in-depth into cell group ministry to the point of designing the whole church around the cell model.

Intersection Small Group Series, *Starting Small Groups and Keeping Them Going* (Minneapolis, Augsburg Fortress, 1995). This is a very practical beginning guide for small groups in the local church; why to start small groups, how to organize small groups and how to train leaders.

Kirkpatrick, Thomas G. *Small Groups in the Church: A Handbook for Creating Community*. 1996. The Alban Institute. This is an excellent nuts and bolts book with everything you need for small groups ministry - planning, recruiting, training and inaugurating.

Leadership Development - Mentoring - Training:

Arnold, Jeffery. *The Big Book on Small Groups*. 1995. InterVarsity Press. [****] I use this book for a thirteen-week small group to prepare leaders for small group ministry. I leave out the chapters on "A Studying Community" (I think it is covered enough in chapter 3) and "A Mission Oriented Community". After the first or second week, they start leading the group.

Gorman, Julie A. *A Training Manual For Small Group Leaders*. 1991. SP Publications, Wheaton.

Lannom, Jack. *Untapped Potential: Turning Ordinary people into Extraordinary Performers*. 1998. Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville. I have just started reading this and have gotten some terrific ideas from it. So far, it is focusing on motivating people through loving them. My favorite quote so far is, "Unconditional love is based on the sustained, responsible commitment of the lover, not on the changing nature of the beloved."

Maxwell, John C. *Developing the Leaders Around You*. 1995. Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville.

Community-Building Resources:

Bunch, Cindy (Editor), *Small Group Idea Book*. (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1996). This is a great idea book. If you don't like the resources she has compiled (I like some of them, some I don't), it will spark your imagination to make up your own. She includes resources for community building, worship and prayer, nurture and outreach.

Corrigan, Thom, *101 Great Ideas for Building a Caring Group*. (Pilgrimage/NavPress, 1997). I have only read excerpts from this book, but everything I have read, I like. Corrigan offers such practical ideas as: send a note of encouragement, take time to notice, ask about previous prayer requests and help group members learn to deal with difficult people, to name a few.

Mains, David and Mains-Timberlake, Melissa. *Getting Beyond "How Are You?"* 1992. Victor Books, Wheaton, Illinois. This is a wonderful book about really connecting with people instead of superficial chatter. It is short and easy to read.

Peck, M. Scott, M. D., *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace*. (Simon & Schuster, Inc., New York, N.Y., 1987.) This book is Peck's *The Road Less Traveled* for groups. This is a very serious, and yet inspirational book about community – what it is and how to achieve it – from the perspective of a psychotherapist and peace activist. He challenges the reader to think, especially about community in the Christian church. I believe most groups that have attained a depth of togetherness less than what he advocates, would consider themselves to be community, but I recommend it nonetheless.

Internet Resources:

The Small Group Network. Home page is www.smallgroups.com Has a monthly on-line newsletter (*Small Group Dynamics*). Some of the stuff is free but, starting this month, the whole newsletter will require membership which is \$39 per year. Soon they will be offering church memberships where you pay one fee and all of your small group leaders can access it.

Serendipity House. www.serendipityhouse.com This is mostly information about their publications (which I like) and seminars, but they have a free experiential exercise ("FREE Coffee Time Activity") which they update monthly. I give those to our group leaders to use as icebreakers.

Injoy Home Page. www.gospelcom.net/injoy/hometxt.html This is mostly leadership resources (to order) written by John Maxwell.

The Small Group Bulletin Board. www.gospelcom.net/navs/NP/dj/interact This is really an on-line version of the *Discipleship Journal*, but the thing they have which is useful is called **The Small Group Kiosk**. It is interactive so you can put in questions and people from various churches and situations will respond with their experiences. If you just want to look at the ideas from other people, click on the responses with light bulbs beside them (for ideas). I have gotten some great icebreakers from this.

Building Effective Small Groups—

Part 1



by David Stark

Stark, who has authored small-group leadership material for *Serendipity*, is director of training for Church Innovations Institute, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Have you noticed that small-group ministry is being talked about in many different circles as vital to the church of the future? You may have read about it in church growth books. You may have heard small groups recommended in a workshop on how to “close the back door” or assimilate new members. They may have been discussed as a way of strengthening the care of your congregation’s members or as one of the keys to an effective, vital church. You might have heard great testimonies about small groups at Promise Keepers events, from a speaker involved in the “recovery movement,” or as part of a prayer strategy to win cities for Christ.

Robert Wuthnow provides an excellent summary in his book titled *Sharing the Journey*, when he calls the explosive growth of small groups in America the “quiet revolution.” He documents that four out of ten Americans are in some kind of small group.

Yet alongside your enthusiasm and commitment to small-group ministry may be skepticism, confusion, or disillusionment with how a church launches and sustains this vital aspect of its ministry. You may be having some level of success or have been disappointed with the results of small-group ministry in your particular setting. As a pastor who has struggled for fifteen years with these questions, and as a consultant for the last five, I have

observed four revolutions in thinking about small-group ministry. These have benefited hundreds of pastors in transitioning from a passion for small groups to actually succeeding in their congregations. In this *Net Results* and the February 1996 issue, I will present some ideas that form the core of thinking about small-group ministry for the church and culture today. Here are two of those four key ideas.

Be principle driven, not model driven. One of the most common errors found in small-group ministries is to structure small groups around an adopted model from another church or organization. This is analogous to borrowing the blueprints to a neighbor’s house and using them to build your own home. A neighbor’s blueprints won’t match your design wishes, just as one church’s small-group model won’t identically fit a neighboring church. Every church situation has a unique history, a specific theology, plus a different demographic and cultural context. Therefore each church has a wide variety of goals and needs to be met. Simply adopting someone else’s model will not guarantee (1) meeting your congregation’s needs, (2) success, or (3) alignment with your goals and direction.

An effective alternative to model-driven small-group ministry is the principle-driven ministry. In a principle-driven system, specific goals are first set for the ministry.

Then portions of small-group models can be appropriately adapted to meet individual church goals and circumstances. Take the analogy of the neighbor’s blueprints a little farther. When designing a home, the architect will consider the goals, style, and needs of the individuals who will live

there. After this research and the assimilation of several architectural blueprints, the architect designs a home. This home has structural ideas that have been used before, but

Church members are at different stages of their faith development and therefore need different types of small-group experiences.

the final design is unique and fits the needs of the homeowners. In the same way, people who design a small-group ministry should begin by assessing their congregation. They then set goals based on the principles of small-group ministry and the needs and interests of their church’s members. Let’s look at an example that contrasts a model-driven system with a principle-driven system of design.

All churches need some way of assimilating new members. Many pastors will pick a model here or there to help them incorporate new members. The model usually fits the church’s situation. The better the fit, the higher the percentage of people who are incorporated.

However, if a pastor were to use a principle-driven approach to new-member

assimilation, his or her approach would be quite different. To begin with, the pastor would need to know that fundamental to new-member assimilation is the principle of belonging. The principle of belonging means that for new members to feel as though they belong or are a part of a congregation, they need to build friendships with three to eight people in that community of faith. This relationship building is best accomplished in small-group interactions.

If pastors or lay leaders know this principle, they can adapt parts of many models of new-member assimilation as long as the new member has a chance to build relationships with three to eight church participants. In some cases, a multi-week class may incorporate small groups into the meeting times. In other churches, the new-member assimilation may include a one-day orientation, in which a sponsor helps each new member build relationships with other people in the congregation. In other settings, a retreat of some sort creates the opportunity for relationship building to take place. Whatever the model, the principle of belonging is the vital core of successful new-member assimilation.

In general then, the first step in planning is not picking a small-group model, but beginning to think in terms of the principles behind why small groups are effective for the leaders' various purposes and goals. Different goals and purposes (requiring different types of small groups) must be established first. Then the design and models can be chosen to accomplish the goals.

Offer small groups of many kinds rather than one standard set. Congregations can make a second common error: offering one standard set of small groups for everyone. "One size fits all" is not effective in congregations, even if your

congregation is small and only has three to eight small groups. Church members are at different stages of their faith development and therefore need different types of small-group experiences. The New

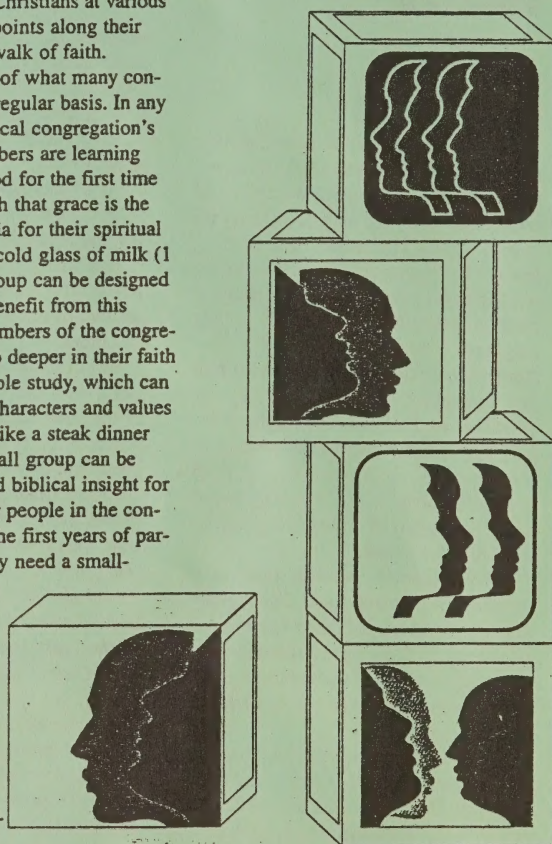
Testament authors often used images like "milk" and "meat" of the Word to indicate different inputs from the Scriptures needed for Christians at various points along their walk of faith.

Here's an example of what many congregations face on a regular basis. In any given period of a typical congregation's life, some of its members are learning about the grace of God for the first time and receiving the truth that grace is the most important agenda for their spiritual development. Like a cold glass of milk (1 Peter 2:2), a small group can be designed so its members can benefit from this experience. Other members of the congregation are ready to go deeper in their faith and want in-depth Bible study, which can help transform their characters and values in significant ways. Like a steak dinner (Hebrews 5:14), a small group can be designed to offer solid biblical insight for these members. Other people in the congregation may be in the first years of parenting newborns. They need a small-group experience that specializes in helping them with this stage of life.

Like special diets (Daniel 1:12-15), various types of small groups allow for specific needs to be met. If these three very different networks of people in your congregation are all placed in only one kind of small-group setting, two-thirds of them will not have their needs addressed. Many will opt out altogether. On the other hand, by designing

and offering a variety of small groups, lay leaders and pastors will capture and sustain the attention of a much higher percentage of their congregation. 

An effective alternative to model-driven small-group ministry is the principle-driven ministry.



Building Effective Small Groups—

Part 2



by David Stark

Stark, who has authored small-group leadership material for Serendipity, is director of training for Church Innovations Institute, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Fall 1995 has passed. Your small-group ministry was launched at the beginning of the church year. The eagerness of the new leaders, the desire for a fresh start, and the enthusiasm to reconnect with friends are in the recent past. The small-group ministry was designed to be faithful to your church's vision and to excite your church members.

However, it is now winter. The days have grown shorter, and the trees and earth are lying dormant. You might be wondering if there has been any growth or will be any growth in your small-group ministry. The midstream reports have arrived, and they are less than what you had hoped for. Some small-group leaders are fighting high levels of absenteeism, and others are exhausted from trying to keep people committed to their group. One leader has some crazy idea that is not at all what you had in mind. To make matters worse, his group has the highest attendance rate of any small group in your ministry.

Your challenge now is not only to support and encourage the leaders of the existing groups but also to start new small groups for Lent. Your commitment to small groups is strong and unwavering, but a small voice says, "There must be an easier way."

If you can relate to any of these feel-

ings, then read on. In my last article, I suggested four revolutionary ideas in thinking about small groups that are helping many pastors succeed in small-group ministry. By way of review, the first two principles are:

1. Be principle driven and not model driven. Know why small groups work. Do not just adopt an existing model from

Four revolutionary ideas in thinking about small groups are helping many pastors succeed in small-group ministry.

another church.

2. Offer small groups of many kinds rather than one standard set of small groups. People need different types of experiences to match their life stages.

I believe that two more core concepts, which are changing the way pastors think about small groups, will be the "easier way" that you desire.

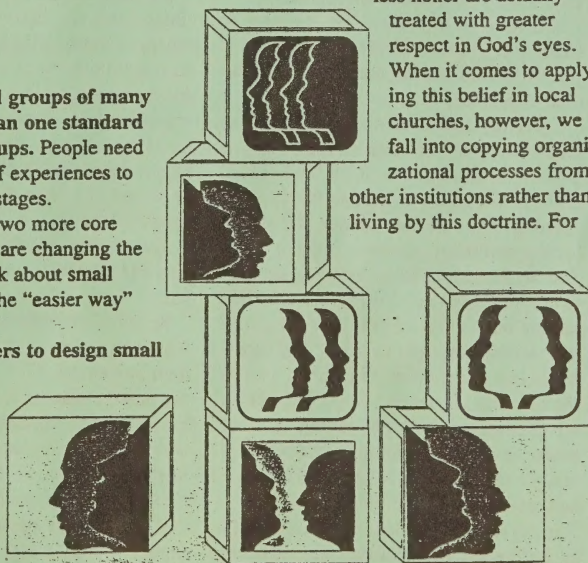
3. Allow leaders to design small groups based upon their interests and passions.

In today's world, organizations are rediscovering that

their employees are more than just a series of skills, talents, and experiences wrapped in different physical bodies. A performance revolution is sweeping the globe, based first and foremost on allowing the people doing the work to be involved in designing, implementing, evaluating, and even profiting from the work they do. Gone are the days when people were just additional tools in management's toolbox.

The Church's theological tradition has always asserted a high view of people's potential and endowment. Perhaps this is best represented in the image of the Body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12, where Paul argues that all people have value in the Body. Those whom we consider having

less honor are actually treated with greater respect in God's eyes. When it comes to applying this belief in local churches, however, we fall into copying organizational processes from other institutions rather than living by this doctrine. For



example, many pastors and lay leaders will design all their small groups themselves and try to find persons with their same skills, talents, and experiences to "run this small group for them." Two results are common: it takes great effort to recruit leaders, and it is very difficult to find the momentum to sustain these groups.

I have witnessed an explosion of energy from lay people when pastors and lay people overseeing small groups make a simple change: *Let your lay leaders design their small groups based on the interests and passions that motivate them.* Three consequences consistently happen when pastors allow this process to occur:

1. Eighty-five percent of the small groups designed this way have a successful start.

2. The motivation and commitment of the small-group leaders are higher.

3. The types of groups designed by small-group leaders tend to produce the results pastors and lay leaders want from their ministries.

I recently consulted with the elected lay leaders and staff of a church that was between senior pastors. What I did not know at the time was the nature of our meeting. The associate pastors had asked for a consultation regarding small groups. The lay leaders of the church had agreed to this meeting to encourage the associate pastors but had no interest in small groups themselves. Needless to say, it was hard to get this group energized when I started the seminar. However, I began the section on small-group design by asking each lay leader to create a small group he or she really wanted to join. After lay leaders had crafted their small groups, I asked them to share their ideas with one another. Before we were finished, not only did excitement fill the room, but to my surprise (and theirs) the lay leaders wanted

to develop this ministry for their congregation.

This experience recurs everywhere I go, because people want to be engaged with the ideas that motivate them. In this tangible way the priesthood of all believers can be expressed in the lives of lay people and pastors as well.

4. Create a Win/Win accountability and support agreement with your new small-group leaders.

By background, I am a biologist and chemist and am fascinated by parallel thought development across widely diver-

gent intellectual disciplines. For example, Newton's ideas about natural laws spread throughout many different academic fields, finding natural laws in chemistry, biology, sociology,

etc. Many people believe this happens during certain pivotal moments in history.

I believe we are in one of those pivotal times. Here is a discovery from the mathematical world of factual science to illustrate what may be at the heart of the fourth revolution in thinking about small-group ministry. Factual shapes are created by using nonlinear equations allowed to repeat themselves randomly. The pattern is plotted in a three-dimensional diagram. In simple terms, the mathematical system is given a few guidelines from the equation and allowed to randomly express itself.

Scientists initially predicted the result would be a picture of chaos—total random movement. What surprised them was the orderly shapes that emerged, often in beautiful patterns. Scientists observed that when the system was allowed to express itself, a "strange attractor" seemed to bring order to the predicted chaos.

How does this apply to small-group ministry? This is a great image for the type of accountability and support system that small-group leaders need as they

begin their newly founded small groups. Leaders need some guidelines to provide boundaries for what they are doing, and they need resources to keep the group running successfully. Then, leaders need room to allow the small groups to flourish and grow.

Those overseeing the small groups commonly make two mistakes. First, some pastors micro-manage the small groups, never allowing the groups a chance to express themselves over time. These pastors and lay leaders are afraid chaos will happen if they do not hold tightly. Second, some pastors may think their job is done when someone signs up to be a leader and his or her small group is launched. These pastors ignore the need to maintain accountability and do not give enough resources and boundaries to guide the small groups' growth in a positive direction. These groups often end up goalless and ineffective.

The middle ground gives leaders enough guidelines and ways to stay accountable but allows for self-management of the group. I call this the *Win/Win Agreement*. The small-group leader wins because he/she receives the resources and support to be successful as well as the opportunity to express and lead through his or her passions. The pastor wins because the given boundaries, guidance, and accountability system are based on the larger vision for the church. Similar to the "strange attractors" that keep particles' random movement in nonlinear equations in order, the individual small groups will not become out of control or chaotic if some guidelines are set and if people in the small groups are allowed to self-manage the system within agreed-upon accountability points.

Like new life in springtime, these four principles are breathing new energy into small-group ministries all across the nation. These principles are effective because they allow God's spirit to work in cooperation with lay people and allow pastors and lay leaders to live out their individual callings. 

Let your leaders design their small groups based on the interests and passions that motivate them.

How To Revitalize an Existing Small-Group Ministry

by David Stark

Stark, who has authored small-group leadership material for Serendipity, is director of training for Church Innovations Institute, St. Paul, Minnesota.



One of my favorite comic strips of all times is *Calvin and Hobbes*. December 31, 1995, marked the end of an era. Bill Watterson, creator of *Calvin and Hobbes*, hung up his pen to take a rest from his syndicated column and go in a different direction. I miss the theological reflections that a six-year-old boy and a stuffed tiger can bring to the world, but Watterson needed a change.

Small-group leaders, managers, and pastors often express this same need for change and the desire for new direction. They sometimes say, "I'm out of ideas!" or "What do we do now?" Such feelings are quite natural as groups go through stages of growth and decline. Yet they need not be final words. Small groups can be revitalized!

George Barna, a market research expert on the church, has kept track of small-group involvement over the past few years. Small-group involvement has taken a nosedive. This warns us that we should make changes in small-group management.

The first way to revitalize your small-group ministry is an obvious one. In Barna's research, most of the reasons for attendance decline were due to inadequate leadership training. The chart at right describes six of Barna's reasons for poor small-group experiences and dwindling group attendance. The right side of this chart lists the seven basic leadership tasks included in our institute's *People Together*—

*The Next Generation of Small Groups** leadership training and materials. These seven elements should be part of any preparation process for small-group leaders.

The second important way to revitalize your existing small-group ministry is to give the leaders support and a process of accountability. Have you ever had a job or volunteer experience in which you never received any feedback? Was your evaluation of your own work negative? A lack

of feedback leaves an employee or volunteer to his or her own evaluation system. Often this "system" is negative and works against the development of self-worth. Also, without support and accountability, leaders often lose direction and momentum.

Small-group management teams must provide a system of support and accountability that provides nurture, guidance, and focus. Support often takes the form of caring and listening. Usually leaders can

Reasons for Decline

1. Indecisiveness concerning future direction of the small group.
2. Misuse of meeting time.
3. Insensitivity to special needs of people in the group.
4. Refusal to deal with inappropriate behavior during the meeting.
5. Discontinuity between sessions.
6. Poor follow-up of absent members.

Tasks for Group Leaders

1. Prepare and review the group's covenant of the agreed direction.
Benefit: The people know where they are going as a group.
2. Plan the agenda for each meeting.
Benefit: Efficient use of meeting time.
3. Plan for special needs and relationships within the group.
Benefit: The group attends to special needs.
4. Guide the group discussion or meeting process.
Benefit: Participants sense the meaning and value of the group experience.
5. Debrief to reflect on the next steps for group growth.
Benefit: Continuity between meeting sessions.
6. Follow up any absentees or important concerns.
Benefit: People who missed the meeting feel cared for.
7. Pray for the group.
Benefit: Our acknowledgement of our dependence on God.

handle three-fourths of group problems and challenges during this support time when meeting together. They need guidance for group direction and difficult group dynamic situations. Most important, the management team that meets with group leaders should continually set the vision and focus for the small-group ministry as a whole and for each small group.

The third way to revitalize your small-group ministry is perhaps the most distinct of the three—allow leaders to design small groups according to their dreams and passions, rather than assigning the same type of small group to all of your leaders. The single biggest concept that helps pastors begin and revitalize their group ministries is an idea most of us know but don't often apply:

Small-group leaders, managers, and pastors often express the need for change and the desire for new direction.

people own what they help create.

God places in the hearts of some of your lay people great new ideas for small groups, both within and outside the

church. If these ideas are implemented, small groups will experience new energy. As an example, our own church's ministry has operated under this concept for the last three years. In autumn 1995, ten different lay people

approached me about small groups they wanted to form. Their passions were varied and exciting. One couple wanted to form a group focusing on Christianity in the workplace. A gentleman wanted to study the life and times of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. A lawyer wanted to study the book *Half Time* by (Bob Buford), because

of his desire to form a life of significance and not just success. Yet another couple wanted to pray and evangelize their neighborhood and have other church members join them in the process.

One disclaimer: Allowing lay people to create small groups does not mean anything goes. Each small group should fit within the church's small-group ministry vision. Then the small-group management team guides and oversees the group's growth by training, supporting, and holding the small-group leaders accountable.

How can we revitalize an existing small-group ministry? In summary:

1. Give your leaders start-up and ongoing training.
2. Make sure a support and accountability structure is in place.
3. Give some of your lay leaders a chance to design small groups from their passions and dreams.

*Available through Church Innovations Institute: 612/646-7633. 

Road Signs to the 21st Century

Continued from page 21

eating and conversing. A visiting group from another congregation occupies one table. They came to be "midwived" by the host congregation. On the table in front of

Book of the Month

Responding to these trends requires church leaders to abandon old assumptions and learn new skills. Most of us need help in this transformation. *Jumping the Curve* by Nicholas Imparato and Oren Harari (Jossey-Bass, 1996), can provide that help. If you can buy one book this year, buy *Jumping the Curve*. Few books have made such an impression on me as this one. It may be my pick for book of the decade.

each person is a round "holobyte" responder (holographic computer) that instantaneously tabulates and records everyone's choices on a large screen surrounding the stage. The screen displays the results in as many languages as are in the congregation. Each person has an earpiece to hear in his or her own language.

People at each table discuss the options listed in the worship folder and record their collective choice in the responder. The cumulative totals of each table result in one or more holographic images' sitting down at each table. The images dialogue with the table group about their choices and how those choices relate to the Bible. After the dialogue, the table groups record the results of their conversations by choosing hypertext links from a given section of a hypertext Bible. One

of these links provides music for each table. These links take them deeper into the biblical story and its implications for their previous conversation. In a few minutes they record the results of their conversations. These choices are tabulated and relayed to the pastor (non-seminary-trained), who instantly customizes her dialogue of the day (sermon) to address their choices. As the sermon progresses, the people can electronically ask questions that give further direction to the pastor. Children are offered virtual experiences of biblical times through interactive computers and visuals.

All of the above equipment will cost less than the price of a good electronic organ and will be programmable by a high school student. Are you ready for this? 